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INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 0043
RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
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RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
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RHMFIU/COMSOCENT MACDILL AFB FL
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2713
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 2857
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 6188
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA 1541

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 003455

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STATE FOR SCA/FO DAS GASTRIGHT, SCA/A, S/CRS, SA/PB, S/CT,
EUR/RPM
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN
OSD FOR BREZINSKI
CENTCOM FOR CFC-A, CG CJTF-76, POLAD

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: CASC PGOV PHUM PREL PTER AF KS
SUBJECT: KOREAN RALLY UPDATE - 08-02-2006

REF: A) KABUL 003320 B) STATE 125681

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¶1. (SBU) Post continues to track a group of approximately 1150 Koreans in country to participate in a peace rally and relief work. News reports characterize the groups as "Christian Evangelicals" and there has already been one Afghan demonstration in Mazar-e-Sharif to protest this event and the situation in Lebanon. Post believes that there is a significant threat towards this group and is working to inform American participants of the dangers. We have also convened the EAC, details Septel.

¶2. (SBU) About 1150 Koreans are reported to have already entered Afghanistan. It is reported that there are approximately 300 in Herat, 400 in Bamyan, 170 in Kandahar, 50-80 in Mazar, and an indeterminate number (probably several hundred) in Kabul. There also appears to be a large number of children (5-15 y/o) included in these numbers. In Mazar over half of the participants are children. Millennium Pacific Icon Group is involved in coordinating Korean-American involvement. They report that 200-400 Korean-Americans will participate. It is also reported that Koreans of other nationalities may participate.

¶3. (SBU) President Karzai is tracking the issue and has issued orders through the MFA and MOI. The MFA was ordered to stop issuing visas to Koreans in order to help prevent travel to the country. The MOI was also ordered to prevent additional members associated with

the Korean groups from entering the country, but may have difficulty in doing so because of logistical and organizational limitations. The MOI has also been coordinating with Governors to gather information and limit the groups' activities for their own safety. Minister of Interior Zarar said that his ministry has begun planning its security response (See Septel). ISAF is working on its own contingency plans and is being urged to provide assistance to the ANP to prepare for possible scenarios.

¶3. (SBU) PRTOff in Mazar-e Sharif reported that there was a demonstration, today, August 2, of approximately 200 Afghans in response to the Korean group and the situation in Lebanon. (COMMENT: One Afghan told a mullah that he had been given a Bible by members of the group to read instead of the Koran. These claims are impossible to verify but speak to public perceptions of the group. END COMMENT.) PRTOff also went to visit the Institute for Asian Culture and Development office along with a representative from UNAMA. They saw approximately 20-30 children at the location, many of whom appeared to be sick but were being treated by doctors associated with the organization. There were two American citizens in the group, one adult female, and one child. PRTOff passed on the department's consular information to the adult and cautioned her about the dangers of being in Afghanistan. (PRT COMMENT: PRTOff repeatedly asked about where the parents of the children were, but did not receive a response. She suspects that they may be orphans traveling with guardians. END PRT COMMENT.) IACD representatives said that the rest of the group, approximately 150 people, had left for Bamyan by bus over the last two days.

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¶4. (SBU) News reports increasingly characterize the group as being made up of evangelical Christians and suggest that they are being seen by the public as an affront to Islam. An article from the Korean Times quotes the group as saying they plan to engage in "volunteer services, missionary work, and cultural performances." All of the current media reports bill this event as having strong religious connections. As a result, Afghans and Afghan authorities are extremely concerned.

¶5. (SBU) Only a handful of Korean-Americans have registered with the Embassy for the period of August 2-8. Post met with the event planners on July 31, and informed them that the Department of State has a Travel Warning for Afghanistan that urges American citizens not to travel to here and that the Department has also warned Americans against participating in large gatherings. Consul also made it clear that the Embassy would provide ACS, but may not be able to get anyone out of jail. Additionally, she noted that while Embassy understands their event is secular in nature, the GOA has not responded well to proselytism and that others have been arrested in the past on these grounds. Lastly, Consul provided organizers with copies of the Travel Warning, Worldwide Caution, and Consular Information Sheet. PolOff closed the meeting by strongly urging the group to inform all of their participants regarding the security situation and also to consider canceling all events. PolOff stressed that while the group leaders may have the best intentions it would be irresponsible not to put the safety and security of their members first.

¶6. (SBU) Post will continue to engage all affected parties to promote a peaceful resolution to this situation. The Embassy's primary concern is for the safety of all who are involved and we are urging the

GOA and ISAF to take the necessary precautions to avoid violence this weekend. Post will send out a warden message tomorrow to all American citizens, and will distribute hard copies to participants who may not have registered.

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